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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, November 25, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WHY ONE FAMILY GIVES THANKS". Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bulletin available 1749-F, Modernizing Farmhouses.

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Thanksgiving dinner is over. How about drawing up our chairs around the fireplace? Let's settle down for a comfortable chat about our blessings, while we munch raisins and crack nuts.

I think it would be appropriate to tell you about a farm family living in Wisconsin, which is rejoicing especially this year because they have just modernized their home and made it much more convenient. I learned about them from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which is cooperating with the University of Wisconsin in some housing studies. This family--lets call them Mr. and Mrs. Smith--agreed to furnish full data describing their home before and after improvements were made, and that's what I want to tell you about.

The home is 72 years old--at least, part of it is. Another part was built 58 years ago. Some of the floors needed renewing. There were hardly any clothes closets, and no bath-room. Although it was wired for electric lighting a few years ago, the electricity was not utilized to pump water. The kitchen sink was supplied by a hand pump. Laundry work in the winter time was done in the kitchen, in portable tubs on a bench. They were filled from the pump at the sink.

You can imagine that this kitchen was inconvenient and tiring to work in. It was a sore point with Mrs. Smith--so much so that she went ahead and changed it around without waiting for advice. The result is that she is not yet quite satisfied with her kitchen, and hopes to improve it still further. But it's a lot better than it was.

Probably some of you are thinking, "Too bad she didn't send for that bulletin that's been mentioned so often--Number 1749-F--Modernizing Farmhouses." If any of you who are listening should be considering changes, be sure to write for this publication before you start.

To go on with Mrs. Smith's story: One of the trials about her kitchen was lack of counter space or flat surfaces on which to set things while preparing or clearing away meals. Storage space for utensils and food supplies was conspicuously lacking. Mrs. Smith now says she doesn't see how she ever got along, what with keeping some of the pots and pans under the sink, others in the wash-room, and still others scattered around.

Traffic across the kitchen was a trial she endured for many years. When the men came in for their meals, they washed at the sink, and, as she says, were always in the way. The kitchen floor was hard to keep clean. The lighting was only fair.

Well, friends, after talking things over with the agricultural engineers and the home demonstration agent, Mr. and Mrs. Smith decided to modernize. After they had installed a water pump, they added more than 20 square feet of counter space on both sides of the sink. These shelves were set exactly the best height for Mrs. Smith--33 and a quarter inches from the floor. It was too bad that one of Mrs. Smith's own mistakes was to place the sink at a right angle to the nearest counter in such a way that only one person at a time can help wipe dishes. The Smith's entertain a good deal and they notice this inconvenience at those times.

New cupboards for food staples provided more than 21 square feet of shelf space near the sink, and included a drawer for bread. Large pans and kettles are now stored below the sink. Mrs. Smith likes sliding shelves and large drawers under her new counters for small equipment.

Some additional cupboards were built in the basement for preserves and quantity storage. The distance from the kitchen makes them impractical for daily use.

A bath-room and two other new rooms were added. One is a utility room that serves as a wash-room for the men and a laundry. The other is a sun parlor. Practically all the traffic through the kitchen has been eliminated by making a hall from the men's wash-room to the sun-room. Another good feature is that the back stairs to the upper floor and the hired man's room cannot be seen from the living-room.

New oak floors were laid throughout, and in the kitchen, new wood trim and new doors. More windows were installed. They give more light, but Mrs. Smith considers them somewhat harder to clean than the old ones, since they have many small panes. The kitchen is sufficiently enlarged to permit eating all but company meals at one end, instead of carrying the food to the dining-room

Some of the other improvements are concrete walls and floor in the basement, and an arrangement for warming the basement when clothes are drying there in the winter-time. Twelve new closets include two in one of the bed-rooms, one in the lower hall and one in the upper, one each for the bath-room and wash-room, and several smaller ones. Formerly there were no individual registers in the upstairs bed-rooms, but that has been remedied. The house has been screened, There are many new electrical outlets, with the immediate result that there are now 5 comfortable reading lights in the living-room instead of one, two convenience outlets in the dining-room, and one in the kitchen. I don't wonder the Smith's have had a nice Thanksgiving this year, do you?

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